



GREENSBORO URBAN AREA

Metropolitan Planning Organization

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of November 21, 2002
3:00 p.m. Greensboro, NC
Blue Room (County Commissioners' Briefing Room)
Old Guilford County Courthouse

TAC MEMBERS PRESENT

Sandy Carmany	TAC Chair
Bob Landreth	Guilford County Board of County Commissioners
Doug Galyon	NC Board of Transportation
Mayor Keith Holliday	Greensboro City Council
Don Vaughan	Greensboro City Council
Robbie Perkins	Greensboro City Council
Mary Rakestraw	Guilford County Board of County Commissioners

ATTENDANCE

Jim Westmoreland	TCC Chair/GDOT	Mike Mills	NCDOT
Tyler Meyer	GDOT	Richard Atkins	Wilbur Smith Associates
Jerry Dudeck	NCDOT	Craig Newton	NCDOT
Scott Rhine	PART	Don Moss	Rockingham County
Gregg Danzer	Town of Pleasant Garden	Jeff Sovich	GDOT
Paul Worley	NCDOT	Craig McKinney	GDOT

Sandy Carmany called the meeting to order at 3:10 p.m.

Action Items

1. Approval of Minutes of October 30, 2002

Bob Landreth moved for the approval of the October 18, 2002 minutes. Robbie Perkins seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes as prepared.

2. Resolution of Support for TIP Amendment

Tyler Meyer stated that this action item is related to two projects: the Gallimore Dairy Road widening project and the U.S. 29 / Eckerson Road project. The action requests the TAC endorse this resolution of support for future amendments adding these projects to the TIP. The Gallimore Dairy Road project includes the section of Gallimore Dairy Road between International Drive and Market Street north of I-40. The project is scheduled for construction to begin in 2008. He also stated that the City of Greensboro is going to fund this segment of the project to complete it prior to the scheduled construction date. As funds become available under the TIP, the city will then be reimbursed that cost with interest.

The second project supported by this resolution is the U.S. 29 / Eckerson Road project. This project would study the feasibility of constructing an interchange on U.S. 29 at Eckerson Road, instead of the currently proposed grade separation. The project has been developed in collaboration with NCDOT. The NCDOT Division 7 and GDOT would be involved in conducting the study.

The requested action would be to approve this resolution, supporting future amendment of the TIP to add these projects. Robbie Perkins moved for the approval of the resolution of support. Mayor Keith Holliday seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Business Items

1. 2004 – 2010 MTIP Development

Tyler Meyer stated that the draft MTIP development process is underway. A public meeting is scheduled for December 10, 2002, which would allow members and the public to review the draft MTIP and related issues. A more detailed report will be provided at the December 18th MPO meeting. This report will also include a review of the policy options in the area of STP-DA funds. The next stage in the process will be to schedule a negotiation session with NCDOT, which should be held in January or February of 2003.

2. Rockingham County Priorities for the MTIP

Don Moss advised TAC that Rockingham County's two key roadway investment priorities are in the MPO area. One is the future Interstate 73, including the NC 68 / U.S. 220 connector. Henry County, Virginia also strongly supports this project. The other priority project is the Northern Urban Loop, from U.S. 29 to Bryan Boulevard. He observed that the north-south highway connectors in this region are inadequate. Rockingham County requests the TAC to consider this in setting MTIP priorities. Mayor Keith Holliday and Doug Galyon agreed that these projects should be established as MPO priorities.

3. MPO Boundary, Structure, and Governance Review

Tyler Meyer noted the review is in progress. Certain elements are complete. The report should be available for review and action in December. Also, the regional TCC Chairs Committee will hold their first meeting on December 2nd, 2002. The mandate for this group is to explore ways to institutionalize and strengthen existing regional cooperative arrangements. They will also consider issues associated with MPO consolidation or federation. The findings of this group will be reported to the TAC when complete.

4. NC Rail Improvement Program and Speed Change Report

Paul Worley reported on the NC Rail Improvement program. This involves a partnership between NCDOT, the North Carolina Railroad, and Norfolk Southern. State and federal funds support the improvements. The North Carolina Railroad owns the corridor and is responsible for oversight, capital planning, right-of-way management, and right-of-way acquisition. Norfolk Southern has been involved in field engineering, dealing with the curves, and streamlining construction and maintenance. The project's goals include increasing speed and capacity, with a goal of raising average speed from 47 mph to 65 mph with a top speed of 79 mph. A centralized traffic control system has been implemented which will enable proper operation at increased speeds and provides numerous additional safety features. The project also includes lengthening passing sidings, reconstructing rail interchanges and super-elevations on curves to improve high-speed handling. Phase I of the project should be completed in 2003. Constant warning-time signal devices will also be part of the project. This would be implemented on all public crossings and would include crossing lights and gates. This would provide consistency and reliability for freight traffic, and improve motorist safety. Future improvement projects include upgrading 37 miles of single track to double track between Greensboro and Charlotte and extended passing sidings between Selma and Raleigh are planned.

Tyler Meyer asked when the project would be completed. Paul Worley stated that it will depend on fund availability. Jim Westmoreland asked what the passenger rail ridership figure is for the Piedmont Triad area. Craig Newton stated that the Greensboro station has the third largest ridership in North Carolina.

Paul Worley then reviewed traffic separation study program. This goal of this program is to improve 3,000 miles of track in the state by improving or eliminating unsafe railroad crossings.

- The study phase includes: drafting study recommendations, meeting with municipalities, initiating public involvement, coordinating with the railroad, reviewing municipality recommendations and presenting a summary of recommendations to city councils or sub-committees. This provides a comprehensive evaluation of public crossing issues on the rail sections under study. As part of this effort, fifty-six crossings have been closed since 1992 between Selma and Charlotte. A traffic separation study process has been initiated in west Greensboro and east Greensboro to Gibsonville. The MPO will be involved as this effort progresses. A private crossing safety initiative intended to close or make changes to 47 crossings from Raleigh to Charlotte is also in progress.
- The implementation phase includes: receiving concurrence for crossing closures, determining an approach for handling environmental aspects, and designing signals and parallel roads. He also advised that 6 traffic separation studies have been completed throughout the state.

Mayor Keith Holliday asked if a map of the rail lines coming into Greensboro could be made available. Paul Worley advised that he could provide a map.

Robbie Perkins noted the at grade rail crossing at Bryan Park. Given the volume and nature of traffic at this location (which includes substantial amounts of harried "soccer parents"), significant safety issues may exist. He asked what could be done to improve this situation. Paul Worley advised that a study could be completed but that one is not currently scheduled.

Jim Westmoreland asked if the vehicular underpasses at railroad grade separations in Greensboro could be improved, noting these structures are owned by Norfolk Southern. Paul Worley observed the projects would be quite expensive and the search for funds could be challenging.

5. MMTC Rail Facility Improvements

Craig Newton overviewed Phase II of the Multi-Modal Transportation Center. He reviewed construction details and timing issues. Highlights include the fact that the entrance to the station is 15 feet below the level of the railroad tracks, requiring a tunnel under tracks for passengers to access the platforms. A separate tunnel will be built for loading and unloading baggage. The renovated MMTC will have two passenger platforms with canopies to serve the rail lines. The platforms are 800 feet and 1,200 feet in length, each with a canopy half its length. Elevators, escalators, and stairways will be provided, as will a ramp for mail handling services. The Phase II budget is \$11 million. The state expects to pay 100% of the cost. The city would be responsible for owning and maintaining the facility. The city and state will seek to enter into an agreement with a passenger rail provider to cover rent for that service. Jim Westmoreland added that a fence would be installed around the perimeter of the center, to limit access except through the rail openings. The plans have been submitted to the city for preliminary review and will be finalized in December. They will be submitted for permitting in early 2003 and bidding will begin with the Division of Highways as early as February or March of 2003. The project duration should be approximately two years.

Scott Rhine advised that a central terminal project for regional transit service funding request would be included in the 2004 TIP.

6. Other Strategic Reports

Tyler Meyer described Early Action Compact program. Through this process EPA may provide a degree of flexibility to areas with the apparent potential to attain the 8 hour ozone standard by 2007 with the proper control measures. Although all air-quality non-attainment designations for the new ozone standard will be made by April 15, 2004, this provision allows EPA to defer implementation of the designations until 2007 for these areas. The Piedmont Triad COG and the Western Piedmont COG are circulating materials to their member counties and municipalities for consideration. This is an opportunity for our area to have the effects of the 8-hour ozone standard deferred to 2007.

Other Items

1. Board Member Update

Doug Galyon stated that I-40 from High Point Road to Chimney Rock Road has three lanes open in both directions. The third lane eastbound from Sandy Ridge Road to Chimney Rock Road will be open by shortly. The westbound side should be completed by the first of the year.

The first meeting of the Piedmont Triad Rural Planning Organization scheduled for 10:00 a.m. on December 10th. The MPO TAC and TCC will be represented at that meeting. Also, the Greensboro Chamber of Commerce plans a combined transportation summit with the High Point Chamber of Commerce on December 17th from 8:00 to 11:00 a.m.

2. Opportunity for Town Updates

None.

3. Regional Update

Scott Rhine advised that the last public drop-in session for review and comment on the Regional Rail MIS has been completed. The public review period on the document will begin in December.

The Airport Area Transportation Study public meeting was quite successful, with attendance estimated at around 175 interested citizens. The study itself should be completed early in 2003. Robbie Perkins asked what could be done to seek NC Highway Trust Fund eligibility for the projects that will come out of the study. Jim Westmoreland advised that this was under consideration, and that more information would be provided in the future.

An opening celebration for PART's regional bus service transfer station is scheduled for November 22nd.

4. Wrap-Up Items

Tyler Meyer advised the next meeting will be held December 18th. The TAC adjourned at 4:45 p.m.